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~~SECRET/US OFFICIALS ONLY/SECURITY INFORMATION~~

Country - USSR
Subject - Alleged Circumstances of Stalin's "Murder" at Gagry/Great-Russian vs. Caucasian Factions.
Place Acquired - [redacted] 50X1
Date Acquired - [redacted]
Date of Information - February - May 53

[redacted]

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1. "Stalin did not die a natural death but was killed at Gagry near Sochi, his summer residence. He was knocked down with a blunt instrument which caused hemorrhage of the brain a few days previous to the date when his grave illness was officially announced.

2. "The cause and background of this assassination was the struggle for power between two warring fractions within the Politbureau: the so-called 'Great-Russians' headed by Molotov and Bulganin and the 'Caucasians' headed by Beria, Mikoyan and Kaganovich. Their tug of war has been going on for years behind the scenes with Malenkov cleverly maneuvering between both groups. For a long time Stalin had given no marked support to either group and had withstood all the pressure of the Great-Russians because of his old friendship for Beria. In autumn 1952, however, Stalin made his decision to sponsor the Great-Russian group. This resulted in the conspicuous build-up of Malenkov as heir apparent at the 19th Communist Party Congress, the 'discovery' of the doctors' plot and the general undermining of the position of Beria and his friends.

3. The latter were not slow to grasp the import of all this. The fact that Stalin had put his authority behind the above moves left them no other way out but the elimination of Stalin's person. As the control of the secret police apparatus was not yet wrested from Beria to any serious degree, the execution of this plot presented no great difficulties.

4. "Stalin's death, coming unexpectedly to the Great-Russians, caught them unprepared and Beria could undo the measures taken against him. For the moment he holds the greatest power in the USSR, as Bulganin's army, too, is honeycombed with his agents. Nevertheless, Beria can hardly hope to become another Stalin. For one thing, the head-hangman of the USSR cannot hope for any popularity however much he tries for it; second, another Georgian at the head of the Empire would hardly be tolerated. Even if he succeeds in remaining in the saddle, his rule will always be by proxy - either Malenkov or some other more neutral figure will act as the head of the government.

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5. "At the same time it cannot be supposed that the Great-Russian group is idle and prepared to contemplate its setback with indifference. Today the power in the USSR is in a state of precarious equilibrium: neither side dares any decisive step for fear of making a mistake and toppling into the abyss. Hence the tactical moves to placate the West, to win a respite and to settle domestic matters before the foreign policy of the Communist Party - i.e., Stalin's old policy - to which both factions adhere- can be pursued again with full force. In the USSR it is felt that decisive Western pressure on the split Kremlin is indicated more than ever; the Soviet leaders would rather make any concessions than risk an armed conflict at a moment when they are so deeply disunited."

-end-

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